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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONTANA GEO-CACHING CONTEST GAINS A FOLLOWING IN MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL

Helena, MT - June 28, 2006— Excitement has been building in the Twin Cities surrounding a new treasure-hunt style campaign sponsored by the marketing arm of the Department of Commerce – Montana Promotion Division (Travel Montana). This summer campaign targets the Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN market and is highlighted by a geocache search within the Twin Cities regional area.

“What is exciting about this campaign is the manner in which it is connecting with people. Montana is an adventurous place and this contest helps build that image and interest in visiting in the minds of our kindred friends in Minnesota” states Governor Brian Schweitzer.

The Montana GPS Quest is part of a larger national campaign that features new marketing creative to promote warm season visitation highlighted by stunning visuals, framed by a boldly colored Global Positioning System (GPS) unit and stamped with the Montana logo.

The inclusion of the GPS element has allowed Travel Montana to develop some creative and cutting edge partnership and promotional event opportunities. One of those events is the Montana GPS Quest.

In describing the campaign, Commerce Director Tony Preite noted “In today’s world, it is hard to break through the clutter to get your message seen and heard. There have been few, if any, geocaching promotions like this. Travel Montana took some chances and chartered some new territory with this campaign and the response from the Minneapolis/St. Paul market has been very encouraging.”

Geo-caching is relatively new phenomenon having started in 2000; however, it has a loyal and enthusiastic following. But if you think it is only highly technology-minded individuals searching out the Montana caches, guess again – families have been taking on this treasure hunt with full fervor.

The Quest's Father's Day winner provided an excellent example of how this campaign is drawing families together. John Thurston of Bloomington, MN relinquished the traditional Father's Day luxury of sleeping in and loaded son "Lukie Bomber" in the car promptly at 9 a.m. in search of the Montana cache. At the end of a self-described neck-to-neck hunt, John and son emerged victorious. Of the experience, Thurston said "What not a better way to celebrate Father's Day but to participate in the Montana GPS Quest as a family. Thanks Montana GPS Quest for the fun hunt. I know my family had a lot of fun participating. You truly made my Father's Day!"

Participants in the Montana GPS Quest search for 28 geocache postcards depicting locations in Montana. Using a GPS, Questers can search for each day's postcard cache placed about the Twin Cities area by using the GPS coordinates and clues posted on the website. New clues and coordinates are posted by 9 a.m. each day of the contest. And for Questers who don't own a GPS unit, photographic clues and a virtual online search are also available on the website. See the campaign in action at www.montanaGPSquest.com.

Daily prizes are being given away starting June 11th through July 8th, with the first person to locate the geocache and post their findings on the web site winning the daily prizes. Local radio stations are also hosting "Montana Trivia" call-in contests where winners may be eligible to win their own Travel Montana GPS Unit. As part of the contest, individuals can enter to win the grand prize of a trip for four to Big Sky Country.

This campaign has been an extension of Montana's presence in the Minnesota market following a winter campaign that also focused on this area which is a key feeder market for Montana visitors.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2005, over 10 million people visited Montana spending \$2.1 billion during their stay. Over 29,000 jobs are directly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$531 million in total personal income for Montana residents.

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